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SERMON XIV.*

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A PLEA FOR THE PREACHING OF CHRIST IN CITIES.

"AND the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."—Acts 11 : 26, last clause.

FROM a remote antiquity the site occupied by the city of Antioch had been recognized by those who observed it as suitable for the seat of a large commercial town. Lying at the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean, almost exactly in the angle which the coast of Syria, running northward, there makes with the coast of Asia Minor, running eastward—only separated from the sea by a fruitful valley, twenty miles in length, through which flowed the river Orontes, navigable for the boats and vessels of that day, and having behind it the winding valley between the ranges of Taurus and Lebanon, through which alone, for many leagues, the trade of Asia could find access to the coast—it was marked out by nature for the uses of commerce, and the establishment of a centre of traffic and of wealth. And the wit of man was not slow to detect this, or the enterprise of man to avail itself of it.

Antigonus laid the foundations of a town, three centuries before Christ, not far from where Antioch was afterwards to be. The Greek kings of Syria who succeeded him—instructed, it was said, by sacred auguries, and obeying the indications of an eagle's flight, which had borne a part of the royal sacrifice to some cliffs overhanging the valley and the river—changed the site as well as the name of the town which Antigonus had not finished, established there their capital, and rapidly developed it into a gay and stately city, numerous in population, rich in resources, echoing with industry, thronged with trade, and early conspicuous for its luxury and splendor. By the Romans,

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when they had dethroned the Seleucidæ, and converted their kingdom into a province, this city was still further enlarged and enriched; till, in the age of Augustus, preceding the time to which the text carries us, it was described by Strabo as including already four separate towns, each of which was important and opulent. By Antiochus Epiphanes the fourth of these had been added to the others. A temple to Jupiter Capitolinus had been built upon one summit, and a citadel on another; the ground had been levelled at the foot of mount Silpius for a superb imperial street, extending four miles across the breadth of the town, under continuous colonades; and all the expanse of palaces and squares had been enclosed in a fortified wall. By Pompey it had been made a free city, and such it continued until the reign of the first of the Antonines. Cæsar had built in it an aqueduct and a basilica. Under Augustus, in the day of the geographer, a gay and brilliant suburb to it had been completed by Agrippa. Tiberius likewise contributed to the restoration of those parts of the town which already were ancient, and the improvement of the modern. And even Caligula, that most desperate and brutal of imperial profligates, whose name had become in his own time the synonyme for every insane atrocity, before the dagger relieved the world of his detestable presence had also left his monument at Antioch, in an aqueduct and baths.

So stood the city—"the beautiful Antioch," as the Greeks already had learned to call it; the "Queen of the East," as Pliny names it—'almost an oriental Rome,' when Paul, as summoned from Tarsus by Barnabas, went thither to preach.

The population assembled in it was of course most various, embracing representatives of many peoples. From the first the Jews—in the impulse of that new desire for traffic which, after their return from the captivity in Babylon, had carried them abroad into all the great cities—had settled at Antioch in large numbers; so large, that already in the day of St. Paul they were allowed to be governed by an ethnarch of their own, and to enjoy an equivalent political privilege to that of the Greeks. The Greeks, meantime, in that spirit of restless and inquisitive activity which contrasted on the one hand the Egyptian immobility, and on the other the habitual reserve and dignity of the Roman, and which made the Greek the merchant, the

sailor, and the colonist of many countries in the centuries before Christ—the Greeks had firmly established at Antioch their arts, their trade, their festivals, their religion, and had made it as much a Hellenic city as was Ephesus or Smyrna; almost as much so as was Athens itself. The Grecian ideas and habits prevailed in it; and the Greek nature, fastidious but unchaste, always more solicitous for elegance in form than for truth and purity in precept and character, and which seems to have run to excess of riot as it roamed more widely from the ancient seats of its traditions and its ancestors—this, to a great extent, moulded the society and fashioned the forms of Antiochene life. It made that life brilliant and picturesque, but sensual in its philosophy, essentially atheistic in its faith, and profligate in its customs, almost beyond the sad and famous example of Corinth.

But these were not all of the residents at Antioch. They who had come from the Euphrates or the Indus on their immense journeys, with ivory, pearl, spices, silks, ebony, and precious stones, not unfrequently remained there when their traffic was accomplished, and added to all the other elements assembled in the city their oriental lassitude and passion. From the west also, as well as from the east, it derived continual increase of numbers. The capital of one of the great Roman provinces, the residence not of the governor alone, but of other officers of the imperial government, often was fixed there; and the beautiful softness, the proverbial evenness and healthfulness of the climate, drew many after them, who came also from the west, for health or pleasure. Emperors themselves admired the charms of the brilliant town, the 'Gate of the Orient;' and almost regretted, in view of its bright and singular beauty, that the claims of state compelled their residence in the prouder metropolis. Cicero spoke of it, before St. Paul's day, in his defence of the rights of Archias, as a city already long celebrated and rich, abounding in learned men and most liberal studies; and again, when thundering against Verres and his crimes, his majestic invective softened into music as he spoke of the extent and opulence of the kingdom of which it was the capital, and of the exceeding grace and splendor of the royal gifts brought from it to Rome.

Amid such a population, in such a climate, luxurious and ener-

vating, with the vast wealth collected at this centre, and with all that was selfish and sensual in man's nature as yet untouched by the power of the Gospel, the general aspect of the social and public life there developed may be easily anticipated. The manifold rites and shows of heathenism were constantly exhibited, in their utmost viciousness, and their utmost pomp. Nowhere else was the theatre more splendid. The races, and all the athletic games which were cherished by the Greeks, were celebrated at Antioch—at first at intervals, and afterwards regularly—at the public expense, with a magnificence not surpassed on the plains of Elis, or on the great Isthmus. They drew to themselves immense assemblages, and became the scenes of riotous festivity. All ornaments and appliances of the most sumptuous and extravagant epicurean life were there copiously collected. A revenue of thirty thousand pounds, derived from the legacy of one wealthy Roman, was annually applied by the government to the public pleasures. Opulent citizens offered liberal largess to him who should invent or import a new luxury; and the panders to pleasure, of every kind, flocked thither incessantly.

Superstition, as well as sensualism, found its votaries at Antioch; and the steps of those who claimed to declare the Invisible to man, crossed everywhere in the streets the pathways of those who sought to make the present city a paradise of every earthly delight. There were Chaldean astrologers, with their astrolabes and horoscopes; there were Jewish impostors, and professors of sorcery; there were dancing-girls from Persia and Egypt, artists from Greece, athletes from Italy, comedians, pantomimes, singers, wrestlers, the servants of luxury, the priesthood of lust, from every land. And there, in the suburbs, amid the thickets of laurel and of cypress, was that grove of Daphne, 'full of harmonious sounds and aromatic odors,' which Gibbon has described with pleased and lingering luxuriance of phrase, where the most continuous and unlimited licentiousness was prompted and enjoined as an ordinance of piety; where genius and wealth and religion had conspired to make the most delightful scenes of nature, embellished with the finest and costliest trophies of the later Greek art, a very shrine and temple of perpetual vice.

It was to this city, the very centre of heathenism, the very metropolis of splendid shows and of sensual joys, the Paris of the old

world, without a single one of the names, institutions, sciences, humanities which have given a dignity to the Paris of the new—it was to this city, apparently so utterly and essentially opposed to all purifying influence, so characteristically antagonistic to the Gospel of Christ, that Paul had come, at the summons of his friend, to preach that Gospel; and here, as we are told, they who believed and accompanied with him were first called “Christians.” It is easy to see how the name arose, and why at that precise point of history it first appeared. It was given undoubtedly as a name of derision; and it is natural to remember, in connection with it, that the inhabitants of Antioch were noted in the old world for their scurrilous wit and their fondness for nicknames; traits from which emperors themselves sometimes suffered, and of which, so late as three hundred years after, Julian the Apostate was made keenly sensible. The name, whose early element of reproach has been long since dissociated from it by the progress of the world, was given at just this time to the disciples, because the rapid extension of Christianity, and its progressive interior development, gave occasion for some name by which to describe the new teachers and worshippers, and this was the one most readily suggested.

So long as the apostles had preached to the Jews only, and had sought to convert those of their own race to faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah, there was no need of a special name whereby to describe them. They were naturally recognized by both Greeks and Jews as only a new sect within the ancient Hebrew people. And that habitual and contemptuous aversion which other peoples felt towards the Hebrews was probably but intensified, where it was not displaced by utter ignorance, towards these obscure sectaries. But when they began, as now openly at Antioch, to preach to the Greeks and Romans also, and to gather converts from every nation as fast as they could reach them, admitting them to all the privilege of their communion without the initiatory rite of circumcision, and valuing the Gentiles who believed in Jesus far more than the Jews who rejected and had murdered him—when they began even to turn away from the latter, and to treat them as voluntary outcasts and exiles from the covenant of God’s promise—then it was apparent that a new community was there coming into being; a community differing

essentially from the Jewish, in embracing all those who recognized and accepted Jesus as the Lord; a community differing, if possible, more palpably from all heathen societies, in the majesty and spirituality of its doctrines, and the beautiful but severe purity of its rule. And to this community, peculiar and aggressive, organized by its own law, pervaded with its distinctive life, and seeking to extend itself in every direction where travel reached and human hearts and minds were active, was given the Name which was caught from the word that was oftenest on the lips of those who belonged to it.

It was given, it would seem, by the Romans at first; since it is formed after their manner, and since the Jews would never have allowed the prophetic word Christ—which had to them, as it has to us, a sacred significance—to be used in such derision. They had a name too for Paul and his associates, which made this superfluous. They called them "Nazarenes;" and a scornful hiss was on the lip of each Jew as he uttered the word. But as from Herod Herodian came, so from Christ came in like manner Christian, to heathen lips; and doubtless the populace of Antioch caught it, as giving them a new momentary sensation, and Syrian, Greek, and Roman alike became rapidly familiar with the term of reproach. It was to them not morally so offensive as the name of Jesuit is to us; but loaded with a dislike yet more prompt and utter, and a contempt more complete, than this awakens. And the wildest dream of drunkenness or delirium could hardly have seemed to them so incredible as the thought that that name should in little more than two centuries and a half become the supreme title of honor of the Emperor of the World; that the religion it represented should have subordinated the state to its maintenance and extension; and that the word from which came the title whose sneer was so titillating, represented in a mystic monogram, enclosed within a crown of gold, and borne on the top of a cruciform standard, should be revered by imperial armies, and dreaded by their enemies, as the sign by which the empire conquered.

It was an early instance, followed since by multitudes of others, in which the ribald wrath of man was made to praise the very King whom it sought to dishonor. And looked at thoughtfully, the little fact seems almost to hold in it a prediction of His triumph

over all opposition, and the progress of the world towards His millennium.

But passing now from the special consideration of the facts reported to us by the text, you observe that we have in it an incidental but distinct illustration of the primitive method of evangelizing the world. The first disciples and teachers of Christianity TAUGHT IN THE CITIES; and they there PREACHED JESUS AS THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, with such energy, zeal, and faithful persistency, that they took from this fact their very name among men. These are the points of general truth suggested by the text, and these are the points on which for a little I would detain your attention.

THEY TAUGHT IN THE CITIES. Take Paul's career, in illustration of their method.

At first at Damascus, near which he had been converted, he had naturally remained, both learning and expounding the new truth which had mastered him, and of which he was to be so noble a minister. Thence, after his prolonged sojourn in Arabia for meditation and study, he went to Jerusalem, that there the fierce and passionate persecutor who had haled men and women, delivering them to prison for Jesus' sake, might publicly avow his allegiance to that Jesus, and admonish the nation of his claim on their reverence. From thence, being repulsed by the instant and intense animosity of the Jews, he departed to Tarsus; and thence, at the solicitation of Barnabas, he now came to Antioch, and abode there a year with the disciples, teaching and preaching. His first systematic work as a minister was thus performed in this city, in which 'the lively licentiousness of the Greeks was blended,' says Gibbon, 'with the Syrian softness,' but from which, nevertheless, Nicolas the proselyte had been taken before as one of the seven almoners or deacons, in which the Gospel had been preached by the disciples who were scattered abroad after Stephen's martyrdom, in which the Greeks as well as the Jews had heard its message, and in which Luke was already preparing for his subsequent work as the apostolical historian.

From this city Paul went forth on his first extensive missionary tour, and hither he returned when that was completed. His second journey, on the same great errand, was here in like manner commenced and ended. And the same populous and profligate capital,

now no doubt in all its parts familiar to his eye, was again his starting-point when he entered on that third tour, whose termination he found in the two years' imprisonment at Cesarea. On these very tours for spreading the tidings of Redemption through the earth—all prepared for them as that was by being subjected to one Roman power, and being instructed in one refined language, and by having outgrown every system of heathenism—he preached chiefly in the *CITIES*. He did not neglect, indeed, the remote rural districts through which he passed. He taught, rather, everywhere; and with the same fervor of argument and appeal, the same admirable aptness and fullness of illustration, with which he preached at Athens or at Corinth, he taught in Galatia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, in the little obscure villages of Lycaonia and of Mysia, among the passes and over the plains of Macedonia certainly, and at length perhaps of Spain. And everywhere he unfolded the true nature of the Gospel, and brought the pressure of his exuberant emotional nature, and of his magnificent intellectual force, to turn men to God as revealed in his Son. But, still chiefly in the *CITIES* he proclaimed Christ's salvation.

At Salamis, and at Paphos, at Philippi, Thessalonica, in the agora and on the rocky Areopagus at Athens, at Corinth, where he abode a year and a half—that wealthy, brilliant, and voluptuous town, the ornament by its splendor, but the scandal for its viciousness, of the world which was enchained by its fascinating lusts; at Ephesus, at Cesarea, again at Jerusalem, again at Corinth, last of all in the imperial city, the great metropolis of learning, fame, riches, power, which drew to itself the obedience of the world, and gathered its tributary streams from all provinces—at each in turn, at this finally, Paul preached to men the Gospel. The intervals were few in his crowded life in which his voice was not heard in some city of the empire. Of the four great centres of the earliest churches, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, we instantly associate him personally with three, and through his companion Apollos with the fourth.

And the reason for this his method is obvious. It was not a purposeless or fortuitous thing. It was the result of a divine plan, whose wisdom was illustriously shown in the issue. It was not that the souls assembled in the cities were more precious than those which were sparsely distributed on the slopes of Lebanon, or in the

far sequestered valleys where herdsmen tended their flocks in Galatia. It was not merely, though it may have been in part, because he preferred the stir and enterprise of a city like Corinth, to the monotony of village life; or because in the cities vice rose to a fiercer and more riotous exhibition, and challenged more defiantly his intrepid assault. But it was also, chiefly, because at these points, the foci of the state, he met the concentrated energy of heathenism, and encountered representatives of all opinions and manners from all parts of the earth. At them therefore the impression of his truths was most immediate, while from them he could distribute his influence across all lands. The man who was speaking at Lystra or Derbe was speaking usually to those alone who immediately heard him. His words might fall indeed on the quick and responsive mind of a Timothy, who should afterwards repeat and widely proclaim the Gospel they declared. But except in some such extraordinary case, the instructions of the apostle were there limited in their reach to the audience before him. But the man who was standing on the isthmus at Corinth, touched the west and the east; reached Rome with one hand, and Ephesus, Antioch, Alexandria with the other. The man who was speaking from Mars' hill at Athens, had the world for his audience; and when he declared, amid the perfect splendor of those temples before whose very blackened ruins art still bows, that God, who made the heavens and the earth, and who made all the nations of the earth of one blood, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, although they be venerable and beautiful as these, the temple of Theseus and the temple of Mars, the Erectheion and the Parthenon, he was uttering a truth which was certain to be scattered, by the minds which received it and the schools which were before it, for the whole earth to hear. The impression of a scene so eminent as that would never pass afterwards from the thought of mankind. And the truth thus uttered, circulating along the manifold lines of intercourse and of commerce, would not cease to appeal to human hearts till history itself had ceased to be written.

Therefore it was that wisely and well the great apostle took CITIES for his pulpits, and preached in them, chiefly and first, the Gospel which he proclaimed, and which he sought to make universal. And the fruits of this are seen in the rapid extension of the domain of

Christianity, which, before his death, within thirty years from the date of his conversion, from being apparently a mere schism among the Jews, had shown itself a separate and world-conquering power, and had as such become recognized and feared, wherever it was not hailed and accepted. At first it was a heresy at which Pharisees sneered; at last it was a power with which Emperors had to grapple, and before whose onset their tyrannies went down into bloody destruction. And in part this was owing to the method of the apostle. To strike at the centres of trade, of population, of fashion, and of influence—at the points from which all forces radiated, and where one standing could touch the whole series of interlinked provinces—this was not Paul's method alone. It was the wise and inspired procedure of those who wrought with him. And for all time their example remains to those who in faith and in works do follow them.

Antioch itself, that most luxurious and licentious of towns, became the mother of churches for Asia. Ignatius, its chief pastor, represented its faith in the Roman amphitheatre. Chrysostom was born in it, and trained in its schools, and disciplined by the austerities of the hermits who surrounded it, to be the bishop of Constantinople. In the reign of Theodosius, its Christians numbered a hundred thousand. A peculiar school of theology sprang up in it, stimulating to more thorough study of the Scriptures. Its liturgy divided the East with that of Alexandria. It was read and sung, and its canticles were chanted, throughout the provinces inhabited by Greeks. The influence of its patriarch was recognized and felt from Byzantium to the Euphrates.

The primitive disciples taught in **THE CITIES**; and at each of them they **PREACHED CHRIST**: with such earnestness and constancy that they took from Him their very name among men. That Jesus of Nazareth, whom Pilate had crucified, was the very Messiah of ancient prophecy, the proper King and Lord of the world, through whom Israel was to rise to its spiritual supremacy, and in whose reign the whole earth should be blessed; that having from the beginning shared the glory of the Father, He, by a true and divine incarnation, had come into the world to manifest God to it, and to introduce into it a new principle and power of spiritual life; that in his words God's wisdom was revealed, and in his miracles, God's omnip-

otence; that by his mysterious suffering and death, atonement was made for human sin; and by his resurrection from the dead, the gates of heaven, opened before, were shown wide open, and the luminous pathway to them revealed, along which all who believed him might follow:—this was the substance of the teachings of Paul, and of all the apostles. It was not the Church, and its authority, which they preached. It was not a system of scientific theology. It was the story of the Divine Lord. In it were those transcendent facts—surpassing all fancies and dreams of men, making the very Hebrew expectation, to say nothing of the heathen, look dull and dark before their splendor, exalting the world to new relations to higher spheres, inaugurating an era glorious and final in the history of mankind—in it were these facts, which at first had softened and quickened their hearts, and inspired their minds, and which afterwards they proclaimed as the means of converting and transforming the world.

The philosophy of human nature, and of the Divine being and government, which was indissolubly associated with these facts, and which on the one hand interpreted them, while equally on the other illustrated by them—this, also, was involved of course in their teachings; and its complete and clear exposition constitutes a large part of some of their epistles. But still the facts themselves were their chief theme; to which they ever returned with joy, from which they derived their most stimulating motives, which they found most effective over men's hearts. And therefore they proclaimed them. Before philosophers and soldiers, before governors and the populace, on the crowned and glittering heights of Athens and on the level beach at Miletus, before Paulus, before Felix, and at Cæsar's tribunal, Paul preached of Christ. It was the theme which occupied his soul from the hour when he saw the glory out of heaven, and heard the words in the Hebrew tongue, till the hour when he joined with prophets and psalmists in the song of the Lamb. And in the last epistle which he wrote, just before he was beheaded, to the youthful Timothy, his son in the gospel, he could say, as he looked back on all the course of his earnest ministry, rough with the toils and manifold vicissitudes of an arduous experience, yet brightened all the way by his love for the Master: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of

righteousness, which THE LORD, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only," he adds, in that spirit of boundless benevolence which never forgot his brethren of mankind, "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." His noble course of wise endeavor thus nobly ended, he went from the city which Nero ruled, to the new Jerusalem in which Christ was the Lord; from the prison to the palace; from the service of Christ, to His vision and reward.

In both the particulars which I have thus indicated, and which are suggested by the record of the text, the example of Paul, and of the teachers associated with him, demands, my Brethren, our imitation. And speaking to-night to this Christian Association, on its twelfth anniversary, I have thought of no theme more pertinent, more important, or more practical than this. As they did who were earliest the representatives of Christ, in a world which was set in antagonism to him, and in which all the powers of evil had gained such vast and fixed ascendancy, so we who follow them, in these later ages, and in these remote lands, must continue to do, if we would fulfil our duty to the Master, if we would make his Gospel of truth supreme in the earth. We must preach of HIM, by lip and life, by word and book, in churches and through charities, publicly and in private; and must preach Him IN THE CITIES, to which God has brought us, and in which by his providence our residence has been fixed.

We must preach Him IN THE CITIES; for nowhere else is the need of this greater, and nowhere else are the opportunities for doing it more numerous and inviting, and from no other points on earth will the influence of it extend so widely. A new sense of responsibility, and of privilege as well, should be born within us, and should quicken our hearts, as we contemplate the fact.

All the causes which conspired to build up CITIES in the day of St. Paul, to make them powerful as the agents of civilization, or splendid as its exponents, are now operating, remember, with greater energy, celerity, and extensiveness; and are coming to their result in towns more brilliant, and more influential, and hardly less vicious, than those in which his ministry was performed. Take this metropolis in illustration of the truth.—Where the narrow Mediterranean spread

forth before Antioch, there stretches before us the expanse of an ocean, to the men of that century terrible and unsearchable, but which, in all its coasts and islands, in the coral reefs that rise through it, in even the sunken rocks which it enfolds, is now known to navigation. And not this only: there spreads forth also, connected with this, that other mightier and less turbulent sea which heaves its tides across three sevenths of the circumference of the globe, and washes shores to which the arms of Antigonus or Antiochus, of Augustus himself, had never sent a single rumor. All the world is thus opened to that out-running enterprise which here has its seat. Every fourth day through the year there come to us voices from the whole area of the inhabited earth. The political, commercial, and social influences which here are established, send abroad in reply their powerful impression.

We have the most marvellous apparatus of instruments with which to assist and to consummate these tendencies. Instead of the few and timorous boats which tardily descended from Antioch by the Orontes, till they tremulously tossed on the Mediterranean, there go from us with every morning those statelier ships that shall wrestle with seas and wildest winds, and from the contest come out unharmed; there go those almost animated ships, more tireless and swift than the old triumphal chariots of the games, within which pants that swarthy giant who rears so much of all that is proudest, and moves so ceaselessly all that is swiftest, in our civilization. And instead of the solitary pass of the Taurus, along whose narrow and rocky defiles the caravans descended to bear to Antioch their scanty burdens, there flow to us through liquid channels, hollowed by man or framed by God, there rush upon us, over ways made level and smooth as floors, in caravan-trains whose tread thunders equal and steady as a star's, from all the expanded districts and states that make the interior, their exuberant wealth.

Here then shall grow—it is inevitable, my Friends, we see already the presages of it—more swiftly than at Antioch, a population more vast, heterogeneous, mighty, and far more effective on the destinies of the world. From every land shall come travellers to this centre. They come already; from Indies, whose messengers never found the Greek cities; from regions more remote than Tarshish and its isles,

or far Cathay. From Southern spice islands, where winds breathe balm, and the heavens sparkle with a tropical brilliancy; from polar snows, where freezing winds chase wild beasts to their lair, and congeal the currents of human life; from both alike they come to us, and daily jostle in our thronged streets. More rapidly, and more variously, shall this great centre be filled with its inhabitants than was possible anywhere before Christ came; till millions shall be needed to compute the population which hardly two generations ago was sixty thousand. Irishmen, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Welshmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Switzers, Danes, Norwegians, Russians, Hungarians, Turks, Syrians, Egyptians, Chinamen, Africans, South Americans, Sandwich islanders, Singalese—all these are included to-day among the multitudes to whom this city gives room and rest; while the eager and teeming American people, from east and west, from north and south, throws in each year fresh thousands to increase them. Already, it has been estimated, that eighty dialects are spoken in this democratic air; and in six of them, at least, daily or weekly newspapers are published, which have ready sale and a wide circulation. Idolatries have their shrines here, as well as Christianity. The Chinese joss-house confronts the church; and the costumes and the customs of far-scattered tribes are equally familiar upon our streets.

Nor only in population are these cities to grow thus; are they beginning to exhibit this vast augmentation. In wealth too, in splendor, in all that can minister to luxurious ease, and all that can tempt or stimulate appetite, in all that can nurse the viciousness of men, in all that can give commercial power, as swift and great shall be their increase. You see it already. Amid these very years of war the surge of wealth rolls out around us, square after square; and the crests of that wave are mansions so splendid that the princes of Antioch might well exchange their palaces for them. All wealth must be accumulated under free, democratic, and commercial institutions—where production goes on incessantly and most widely, where labor is honorable, where invention is tireless, and where the government of beneficent laws is equal and uniform—all wealth must accumulate with a speed, to an extent, impossible in those ages when war was the rule and peace the exception, and when the capricious tyranny of

the despot might at any time interrupt with confiscation and robbery the most orderly progress of the family or the state. Even temporary reverses, which check this advance, and seem to threaten its arrest, are only as rainy days in summer, which howl through the leaves for a little time as if winter had come again, which make the gardens shed their blooms, and corn-sheaves droop their silken tassels, but which pour a fresh vitality through nature, and bless it by interrupting a too withering glare. With only too great rapidity and abundance shall wealth accumulate at these thronged centres of modern commerce.

And with it shall come also art and invention, in their harmonious and connected departments, to be the ministers and interpreters of its tastes, and in turn to train it to finer issues. Institutions of learning, academies, universities, collections of art and every science, libraries, museums, professional schools—all these shall be gathered, not instantly, but gradually, by a law that is spiritual, and yet that controls the forces which it affects as the rule of gravitation draws the stream towards the sea; until immeasurably more ample in all the apparatus and equipment of society shall be these cities, than were any of the age in which Paul preached; and far more influential, wherever the relations of their commerce extend.

Remember, then, how the supremacy of thought over military force is characteristic of our civilization—except in times of rebellion like the present, which have not been before, and which shall not be again till the continent sinks, when the last cannonade which already has commenced shall have signalled their end;—how the ballot takes the place of the bayonet and sabre, and the press is instead of squadrons of cavalry. Remember what means of distributing thought we have and use, of which the ancients had no conception; how every ship that swings out to the main from yonder piers may bear whole armories of the thought of this land, of the thought of this age, between its decks. Remember how languages are being reduced to alphabetical form, more than two hundred of them having already some literary resources; and how interlaced these languages are becoming, so that now most distant and dissimilar nations have certain common forms of speech, while our own ancient English tongue is swiftly gaining a prevalence on the earth even wider than

the Greek had when Paul preached in it. Remember these things, and you see at once how mighty and how wide is the power of these CITIES.

And then remember that behind these instruments and vehicles of thought there stands a people, the majority of it—unlike the mixed and sensual mass of Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Jews, who made the majority of the population of Antioch—united in the sentiment of the authority of justice as between man and man, in the sentiment of reverence for liberty as man's birthright, and of reverence for Christianity as God's revelation, and eager to inform and to transform the world through these ideas; and you see again what an eminent pulpit this metropolis is, in which and from which to preach Christ to mankind. He who preaches Him here, preaches to India, China, Japan, to Kamtschatka and Labrador, to the Society islands, to Borneo and Siam. He sweeps not merely that "many-nationed sea" the Mediterranean; but round the world, on every coast, is felt the far vibration of his influence. 'Not an axe falls in the American forest,' said the English statesman long ago, 'but it sets in motion a shuttle in Manchester.' Not a voice speaks for Christ, we may say as well, in these central American cities, but its echo is heard, sometime or other, wherever the shuttle sends its fabric, wherever the traveller pierces the jungle, wherever the dawn of a Christian civilization begins to disperse the heathen night.

And, finally, to complete this series of suggestions, remember the peril, as well as the privilege, which comes with such vast congregations of men, diverse from each other in origin and in habit, only drawn together by the common attraction of ambition for wealth, and with the force of sin in each perhaps trained and invigorated by his contact with others. The lesson we consider seems then doubly emphasized.—All communities of men need Christianity in the midst of them, for their peace and security, as well as for their culture. A democratic population needs it, if possible, even more than one organized around more ancient and fixed institutions. But of all democratic populations on the earth, not one so instantly and so palpably requires it as does the free, self-governed CITY; where local attachments, and ancestral associations, possess no power; where the ignorant and the profligate drift together in swarms, by a natural

gravitation; where multitudes shield in a dangerous obscurity individual ruffians; where the ministers of the law may be the choice of the rabble; and where vice grows always more fierce and more proud through an unchecked indulgence. We should know beforehand that such a city, except as restrained and reformed by the Gospel, would tend to become a very Sodom; and we ourselves have seen that it does so. Your own experience has lately declared it, with a vividness that cannot be soon forgotten. Your own eyes have seen—as men looking down into uncapped craters see vast volcanic waves of fire raging and hissing underneath,—your own eyes have seen what a hell upon earth the finest and foremost American cities may instantly become, when a furious popular passion is excited, when law is set aside and its agents are either purchased or paralyzed, and when the Gospel has gained no supremacy in them. And till you forget your own identity, you will not be likely to forget that fierce lesson. To talk of the duty of making Christianity here prevalent and supreme, in the light of our own experience of its need, seems wholly superfluous. It is talking of the duty of abstaining from social suicide; of the duty of maintaining our civic existence. And the impression of the scenes to which I have referred can hardly pass away, till all the events and the duties of this life have ceased to engage any longer our thoughts.

Look forward, then, and observe that there is nothing more certain in American society, than that many chief forces and tendencies of it conspire rapidly to build up such CITIES; to drain the country for their increase, and subsidize other lands to supply them; to make them proud, powerful, and profligate, the most fitting places in all the earth for the Gospel to be preached in; there is nothing more certain than that all these influences are only to be energized, and made still wider and swifter in their working, by the very war through which we are passing; and that when it has had and closed its dreary day, the CITIES will be found more thronged, more attractive, and more turbulent and passionate than ever before;—and there will be nothing more certain, I think, to every mind, than that the example of the primitive teachers is by us to be followed; that we are to labor to make the Gospel supreme in these centres, with most emphatic and constant endeavor.

We should not neglect one spot on earth. We should not leave an island unvisited, or one remote shore untraversed by the missionary, where zeal can carry and love sustain him. But we should plant first, chiefest, most conspicuously, at the centres of commerce, population, and wealth, at the centres as well of organized sin, all the influences that there can enlighten and purify. As the rays of the sun are concentrated on the focus, till the stubbornest metal melts beneath them, so the efforts of Christians should be combined upon CITIES, with a redoubled and constant energy, till the whole population has felt its power.

The efforts of Christians: and their efforts, you observe, in this one direction of PREACHING CHRIST, as did the apostles; until they also shall be distinguished among men, not as successful in commerce or the professions; not as politicians, as scholars, or as gentlemen, ornaments of society, or props of the state, but as believers in the Son of the Most High, who are aiming to bring the whole world to receive Him.

I open no controversy in this remark—as surely I can have no other relation than one of entire respect and love, of cordial, grateful, and admiring sympathy—with those numerous and greatly beneficent institutions which have sprung into being in a few years past, to relieve in a measure human want; to administer aid and healing in sickness; to give homes to the houseless, cheer to the despondent, instruction to the ignorant, and a refuge to the tempted. All these are not only most useful and noble, in design and in work, they are Christ-like and divine. The very genius of the Christian religion is brightly expressed in them. They are better than cathedrals as its exponents and instruments, and to every thoughtful observer more imposing. Nay, more than this: they are the almost animate representatives of the Lord. Through them the Master still walks the earth, touching as of old the blind and the deaf, releasing the lame and restoring the sick, and unloosing the manacled lips of the dumb; and the series of His miracles, in the spirit they revealed, if not in the very power they involved, is perpetuated in them.

But I have sometimes thought, or feared, that in the midst of such enterprises as these, sublime as they are, and most fruitful of good, while engaged with all enthusiasm and joy in their prosecu-

tion, we might perhaps lose sight to some extent of the primary importance of PREACHING CHRIST; of preaching Him by books and tracts and Bibles; of preaching Him by a personal ministry to the destitute, and by fixed and recurrent public services, in the hall and the chapel, as well as in the church on this His day. This is spiritual, and not physical, in its power and operation; and so we are tempted sometime to underrate it. It is familiar, and so we forget it, and exalt to a relatively undue importance the more infrequent and impressive institutions. But because it is invisible, it is also more pervasive than any other influence; and because it is silent, and essentially spiritual, it works with the mightiest reformatory energy. It is the life beneath the muscle. It is the power within the mechanism. Nothing can supersede it, for nothing else can fill its office.

CHRIST, as the personal centre of the Gospel, to whom all ancient prophecies point, whom the narratives record and the epistles demonstrate, the Saviour of the world: not a romantic Hebrew peasant; not a mere inspired sage; but the one divine Being who has taken upon himself our nature and life, and has manifested the Infinite by whom we are encompassed;—Christ, as the author and the patron of reform, the perfect example and the constant mediator of all loveliness and virtue; in whom the poorest may find friendship, the guiltiest forgiveness, and the most defiled an inward cleansing; whom angels worship, and saints adore, and whose coming to the earth has crowned its years and lands with glory, and yet who is interested in each of his followers, is their strength in temptation, their solace in sickness, and who comes hereafter to be their Judge; through whom men may be heirs of God, partakers of his nature, partakers of his peace, and after this life the participants of his glory;—HE is to be preached, as uniting in himself all the attributes of God, and reconciling them all with the rescue of the sinner; as offering himself with an equal appeal from the cross and from the throne; at once absolute in law and infinite in pardon; the Lord of the world, and the Leader to the heavens.

There is no other force but this that can penetrate, pervade, and build up society in cities like these, and crowd their surface with benign institutions. The fine ethical schemes have no energy like it; nor have any church forms; nor has any remoter philosophy of re-

ligion. Literature, divorced from it, merely tantalizes or tempts; it cannot inly rectify and renew. All political changes, all social ameliorations, which do not have this for their basis and their instrument, are as fleeting as the seasons, and essentially superficial.

Not only then in churches like this, but everywhere through the town, where men are gathered for business or for pleasure, wherever they have their workshops or their homes, wherever their life drifts forward towards the Future, must CHRIST be preached;—by missionaries in part, but not by them only; by all Christian men who believe in the Lord, and to whom life is given and is precious, that they may thus employ it for Him; to whom speech is given, that royal gift, not that they may fritter and waste it upon sport, or dishonor it by profanity, or debauch it by untruth, but that they may make it vital and noble with the power of Christian truth, and with the force of spiritual feeling. When this is done—when young men rise to the greatness of their office as living and earnest witnesses for Christ, and when by their agency, with that of others, the grace of the Gospel, its infinite truths, its great examples, its incomparable offers are seen on all sides in vivid exhibition, resident and regnant throughout the city—then that city, grow swiftly as it may in population, in power, in importance in the world, will be cleansed and pure in proportion to its growth. The Spirit of God shall reign within it. The kingdom of salvation shall have one of its thrones there. The tidings of life and pardon in the Messiah which there are spoken shall fly from thence, as from a pulpit of stone and gold, throughout the earth, as if an angel announced them in mid air. And the peace, the security, the joy of that city shall be like those which the prophet foresaw in the city whose stones were to be laid with fair colors, and its foundations with sapphires; whose windows were to be of agates, its gates of carbuncles, and all its borders of pleasant stones; for “all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

The apostolic example thus presents to us a duty as binding as that of chastity or of prayer, and as permanent as the tendencies of the world's civilization. Better to sink these cities in the sea, than not to evangelize them. Better to concentrate our force upon them, than to spend it on any other province of the earth.

Let me leave then, my Brethren, this single thought with you, as we separate again from this anniversary; and let its impression remain on your hearts through all your future life in the city. "I have spoken unto you, young men," said the apostle, "because ye are strong." I have spoken unto you, young men of this city, because you have faculty, opportunity, spirit, a long and useful life I trust in store for some, for many among you. Be awake then to the greatness of your responsibility; be alive to your privilege; amid these very years of war, to make CHRIST known here more widely, more effectively, than ever before; and in all the more quiet years to come, after the air shall have ceased to be shattered by the echoes of the battle, to still proclaim His word of truth, and still maintain and further His cause, wherever and while the opportunity offers. In the churches with which you are severally associated, be examples to all of Christian faith, in labor, in patience, and in large liberality. No church on earth is designed by the Master to be a mere place of religious enjoyment. Work is its first duty; and enjoyment afterwards, as gained through that work, is its privilege and reward. It is not a Sybaritic retreat from the world; it is a seminary of all good effort. It is a fort, and not a parterre of spiritual flowers; a position in battle, not a play-ground. Least of all is a church in such cities as these, whose daily commerce traverses the globe, whose hourly converse involves the use of scores of languages, whose elements of evil as well as of good are all eager and strenuous, a place for any religious dilettanteism—any selfish, indolent, epicurean Christianity. The largest plans are those most germane to it. The most vigorous effort to accomplish these plans alone befits its place and office. Enthusiasm is for us the soberest reason. Vigilance and self-sacrifice become our customary duties. And every one in such a church should feel that he is in a part of the field of the world where the contest is most urgent, where duty is doubled, and where to fail or to sleep on his post were the fearfulest treachery.

But not in the church only is this work to be done. A Christian man, if once impressed with the theme we have considered, will find means, opportunities, incitements everywhere, to his duty to the Master. He will manifest Christ, and teach men of Him, wherever he goes. In business and in pleasure, in conversation and in life, on the pave-

ment and the pier, as well as in the church, the field is open, the call is constant for his exhibition of the life, the rule, and the spirit of the Lord. Probity in business, to one's own disadvantage, is better than any sermon or treatise illustrating the law of Christian integrity. A sweet and spotless life of love is a new evangel that interprets the old. The man who always honors the Master, in his works as in his words, sings hymns, as did the early Christians, in the workshop and the counting-room, to Him as to God. And he who accepts and fulfils this office, although his voice is not heard in the streets, and the sacraments are dispensed by other hands, is working with apostolic means to fulfil a mission than which the apostles' was not more high. He represents a Master whom the city most needs for its own preservation. He articulates a message which the multitudes around him need more than they need those tidings of victory which they watch for so eagerly; more than the tales of wealth and success which to them make speakers seem 'golden-mouthed';—a message which commerce shall charge herself with carrying, and which the long and widening civilization that radiates from these centres shall not outlast, and shall never outrun. In the heraldry of heaven, the captains of the earth will have no place of precedence like his, who in these growing American cities has done his part to make the word of Christ supreme. And in the coming illustrious Future, which day by day is drawing nearer, of which each spring is but a witness, and every sunset a new promise, and which holds the immense and immortal reward for all we have here endured and done—to have wrought in this work will be a privilege which the seraphim shall covet; to have died in its performance will have been our coronation!

That such may be your life and work, and such your vast and bright Hereafter, may God in his great grace permit! And unto Him be, now and ever, from all His church, continual praise. Amen.

SERMON XV.

BY REV. CHARLES D. BUCK,

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GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE UNIVERSE OF SOULS.

"WHITHER shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."—Psalm 139: 7, 8.

You may think that you already understand these words—that they refer to the divine omnipresence. It is so; and yet the idea here presented is, not merely that *God* is all-encompassing, all-pervading, but this truth in relation to our own individuality. Not simply that he guides the sweep of distant stars, and weighs the atoms of the smallest dust, but that *I*, in society, or in solitude, living or dying, am in perpetual contact with him. Nor can I escape him. "Whither shall *I* go from thy spirit? or whither shall *I* flee from thy presence?"

These questions are intense in their negation, unanswered because unanswerable. But we may well ask ourselves, what feelings do they excite in us? How do we regard them? For they bear, with an immense pressure, on our personal character and our future destiny.

I. Let us then, first of all, consider *our relations to God's presence in this world.*

It is full of him. Nature's various phases are so many thoughts of God, expressed in material form; just as a statue, or a cathedral, is a conception of the artist, embodied in stone. Earth stands like an altar, evolving perpetual incense to the divine glory. That glory glows on all the plains, it is enthroned on all the hills, it broods over all the streams, and in the very air. No one can hold communion with Nature, without feeling she is more than the machinery of the universe, that she *means* more than she says, that she labors and strives to tell us more than just what strikes our senses, that she speaks to our *souls*. Have you never felt it?—that a *spirit* speaks out of nature, glorifying and exalting great truths, to the souls of men, as it does not to their eyes?

It is God's spirit that "garnished the heavens," that "moved upon the face of the waters," speaking, at all times and in so

many different voices, of God's presence. Seneca, a heathen, felt it, as he said: "Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee." David, a Christian, felt it; that even his *thought*, "taking the wings of the morning," the sunbeams (a simile of swiftness beyond all comparison), could not go where God is not. And next to the omnipresence of God, is that of human thought.

But after all, what Nature says to us of God needs to be interpreted and supplemented. The mere fact that God is every where has no moral power, unless we know what God is. Is he a Law, a Force, a Principle, throbbing in all things, visible and invisible, vast, irresistible, inexorable; or, has he personality? If a person, is he indifferent to us and our deeds? Every where seeing us, yet does he *care* about us? Does he note us to catch us in sin, or save us from it? Will he pity us or spurn us?

You will tell me of the fatherhood of God—of his goodness and benignity. Truly, I see in many things his goodness. But I ask, is God *always* good? I see around me many evils; what shall I do with these? Paley says, count them down, and settle the question by the majority of goodnesses. But why any evil *at all* in the government of benevolence, boundless as omnipotence? Can a good God forgive sin, or divorce natural from moral evil? Nature can not tell. No man, who turns from the cross, can tell.

Then God has given us other manifestations of himself: His *word*, to tell us what he is to us, and wills of us; his *Sm*, that he *might exercise* his attribute of mercy toward us; his *presence*, "the likeness as the appearance of a man" on the throne above the firmament, and over the heads of all living creatures; while the bow, in covenant mercy, overarches, with mellowing glories, the majesty of the Infinite Jehovah. Only the revelation of God in Christ declares, with the greatest possible emphasis, that the charm and perfection of his holiness is his goodness.

Therefore, being good, God can not be bad. Loving holiness, he can not love wickedness also. Nor does he. Of all things in the universe, sin is most odious to him; for "sin is the transgression of the law." Of all things in the universe, love is the most delightful to him; for, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Side by side with his promises to the loving soul, are his threatenings to the sinner. And that which gives both all their power is, that *God is every where*.

How now do we feel about God's presence in this world? Do we rejoice in it, or had we rather God were out of the way? Do we say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," or do we cry, with one of old, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory?" This was the cry of a soul not ignorant, by any means, of God's glory, yet who would see *more* of it. So David

desired none on earth besides him. A real penitent never dreads to have God near him. Forgiven in Christ, all aspects of all things are changed. Life's experiences are exalted into a spiritual discipline. God's dealings appear all glorious to his trustful faith. He is reconciled to every attribute of God's character, and *loves* them. He *obeys* God, not lest he should be punished, but because he loves him. He *submits* to God for the same reason, and *rejoices* in his universal presence, as that of a friend and a father!

Oh, how delightful the thought, that the great God is one in whom we can confide! How transporting the thought, we can not go where he is not—that "he will be our guide, even unto death!" And though he must know all our guilt, yet because he knows it all, he has provided a Redeemer from it. *How* Christ saves us, we may never fully know, but we know he does save us. This is enough; if he saves us from our sins, we have nothing else to fear, and we can rejoice in the omnipresence of just such a God as he has declared himself to be.

But in this, the perverse sinner never rejoices. Rather is it a gloomy thought, that God's eye, more to be dreaded than ten thousand witnesses, searches all his secret sins, pierces all his serene respectability—this is so appalling, that his only relief is to forget it. But whither *can* he flee from God's Spirit? He may resist it, quench it, grieve it; but still it is around him. He may close his heart and his eyes, but he can not close the eyes of God's Spirit, while he deprives himself of his only possible consolations in life or in death. In a world, made, redeemed, and filled by God, yet without God in the world, and without hope in his end!

II. But the text bears chiefly on *our relations to God's presence in another world.*

Somewhere we must live hereafter. Of the future state we know nothing by experience, nor has any soul ever returned to tell us of it. But each shall soon know all about it for himself. And when our disembodied spirits step forth from their tabernacles, who can guess what we shall see? what we shall hear? how we shall communicate with the intelligences that inhabit eternity, or they with us? What new faculties—whose existence we never suspect while wrapped up in the body—will then come into play! Our souls are awfully profound. Elements of woe or bliss lie cradled in these rare and exquisite structures, all ready to rise in giant might. Sometimes, in this life, we tremble, as the depths are uncovered; and, sometimes, are thrilled with unspeakable rapture at glimpses of the heights to which no-wing, save of a Christ-redeemed soul, can soar.

Now, what we are here, we shall be hereafter; the self-same beings. He who is holy shall be holy still, and he who is evil

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shall be evil still. So God has told us, and so we feel it. Whatever we do not know of the future state, we know this of it, we shall carry our identity into it. And whatever we may see or may not see in that state, we know we shall see God, far more distinctly than ever here; that, when these material eyes are dissolved, these shutters of the soul's vision taken down, we shall know and feel the actual truth of the words: "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Aye, then we shall be able to add, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."

Hell, some will tell us, is here only *sheol*, the grave. That is indeed the word, but this is not the only place where it *must* mean far more than the receptacle of the body. It is here put in contrast with heaven, and the opposite of that is hell. Moreover, the Psalmist speaks of living, conscious being, and that is found, not in the grave, but in the world of departed spirits. Yes, God shows his glory to *all* the spiritual universe, as he did to Moses, by making all his goodness pass before them. The proclamation issues from the throne, and sounds through all the eternities: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." What is the character of God in this world, will be his unchangeably in the world to come; and these attributes will there shine forth, so that every eye shall see them. Every soul shall see that he is gracious and long-suffering, and that he will by no means clear the guilty. It shall be seen by all heaven, and it will make them happy; it shall be seen by all hell, and it will make them miserable. But in their hatred of it, where can they go from his presence?

Now I suppose that we often attach erroneous ideas to the existence of that place called hell. We say, perhaps, it is a place where God is not, where wicked souls are shut up so that they can not see God. I apprehend that conception is incomplete. A wicked soul would like nothing better than to be shut up, where he can not see God, nor God see him. It is his great object in this life to get away from God, or have God get away from him; such a place would be his paradise, not his prison. But it is not so. The rich man in hell *saw* Abraham and Lazarus in his bosom. Lost souls behold views of God's character the most distinct, visions of his glory the most bright—his mercy on believers, his justice on unbelievers. The sight of a holy company, "afar off," will be before them; and though to them Christ shall say, "Depart from me," it will be from him only as a Redeemer, never as their Judge and their Eternal Ruler. If they make their bed in hell, behold, he is there.

A clear sense, also, of their obligation to love and praise him

will rest upon them, and yet they *will* not love, and *will* not praise him. Nay, the very same glory that draws divinest music from the harps and voices of heaven, will draw from them weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Their everlasting destruction shall proceed "from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power;" that same presence and glorious power that shall "be admired in all them that believe."

Oh, it is terrible to think of it; to have no place where one can flee and wrap himself up in his own lonely misery; to hate to see God, and yet to have to see his glory in the vessels of wrath, his glory in the vessels of mercy; to try to hide from God's Spirit and escape from his presence, and yet to feel that God is awfully and dreadfully near him. To sink deeper and deeper into the bottomless pit, to find in the nethermost abyss, behold, *God is there!*

Now it is evident if you put such a man in the *place* called heaven, he would still be most wretched. He must there remember what good things he received in his lifetime. He must there remember that he did not choose what God chose for him, did not try, ever so faintly, to love God and be like God. And there would he be miserable in what he saw of God. With no sympathies with the holy ones, full of contradictions and antagonisms toward God, he would not and could not be happy. So Satan fell, even before the throne—so learned to hate Him whose name is Love. And so any sinful being would be there or any where, for it is not *where* he is but *what* he is, that makes him blest or wretched. How great must be the change *in him*, before he can be ready for that heaven of which it is the chief joy, *God is there!*

On the other hand, he who delights in God and loves his whole character however it may be displayed, can not be miserable any where. If he ascend up into heaven, God is there; if he make his bed in hell, behold, God is there. Yes, in hell. Lost souls are there monuments of his justice; they are those to whom he stretched out his hand of mercy all the day long, whose souls were precious in his sight; but who did not, and do not, choose that he should reign over them. We read that those in heaven say, "Amen, Alleluia," as the smoke ascends for ever and ever. Most solemnly true, because it is in God's word of truth. One thing is certain, this they do; and we can no more doubt this element in heaven's praise, than any other. And they say it, not because they delight in suffering, or find it easy to be reconciled to the woes of others, but because they recognize God even there, while the least malevolence or injustice in his dispensations would hush all their praise and cool all their love.

The bliss of heaven is not *ignorance*, as many fancy. God has not one side that may there be seen, and another that must not be

seen. And they return from the survey of all his dealings, to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion."

Seems it to you, my hearers, that the sight of hell must make those in heaven unhappy? It does not make God unhappy, who sees it all. No sin in any creature can make God sinful; no sin in hell can make those in heaven sinful, and therefore can not make them miserable, for all misery lies in sin. Besides, all considerations of creatures are subordinate to the consideration of God. Higher than all human loves is the love of God, even in this world; and though we may not fully understand it here, yet we may believe that the Christian mother will resign the ungodly child, without the least abatement of her happiness. No, the sight of hell can not make those in harmony with God unhappy.

And you may go farther than this. You may take such a one and place *him* in hell, yet, if there God answereth his cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me," he would be still praising him. Those manifestations of God (whatever they may be) would give him no more misery in the midst of them than in the sight of them. There would be talk with God, face to face, as a man talketh with his friend; for God is there.

And I take it, there is no higher evidence of a soul's harmony with God's will, than to be able to say, I resign all my interests, for eternity as well as time, into thy sovereign hands. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight. I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.

You know, my friends, the pithy remark of Newton, that if God were to commission two of his angels, one to sweep the streets, and the other to be prime minister in the capital of an empire, each would proceed with equal alacrity to his allotted place. So with all saints. In whatever part of God's dominion he might send them, they would go. The cry, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," would be answered too; for there is no place where it is not. What is misery to all unholy beings would be joy to them; and they would love just that which sinners hate. The beatific vision they would see and adore, and the sight of the redeemed would cheer them in their obedience. All that is needed is a heart to see, and adore, and obey.

Do I then mean to say it should be a matter of *indifference* whether we go to heaven or hell when we die? Not at all; there are many reasons why we should never choose the companionship of the enemies of God. But *if* we could glorify God and enjoy him—that chief end of man—more in one place than another, we ought, certainly, to submit our wills to his.

"Were I in heaven without my God,
'Twould be no heaven to me,"

and a soul in hell, as a locality abstractedly considered, could not be miserable with God. "Songs in the night" would sweetly rise, while wondering angels stooped to listen. We suppose the errand of a soul sent to sing one of the melodies of heaven in the world of woe, would carry such spiritual power and character, that the solitary praise would go up clear and distinct over all the surrounding rage and despair. And how glorious such a soul must be! How grand and deep the sanctification, by which a sinful human spirit is ransomed from sin's discords, and attuned to the harmonies of love! When God's love is perfected in it, all fear shall be cast out, the illimitable universe shall be filled with liberty, songs of praises shall keep pace with the ages, while every doubt shall vanish, like mists in the clear morning!

And now suffer me to apply this:

1. As a matter of great comfort to the people of God. Some of them have many fears respecting the future. They long for a token of their acceptance.

Let me say, the question of their preparation for heaven is that of their relation to God. If, in his dear Son, you are reconciled to him, if the thought of his everlasting presence is not a huge shadow in your soul, if you can praise him for all he is and all he does, if you love what he loves and hate what he hates, the great question is already settled.

Love works by contraries, so to speak; we know what we love by what we hate. The love of God, shed abroad in the soul, produces in the soul an aversion to sin; and this evidence of love grows the more, as we hate sin the more. We know more of the preciousness of Christ, as we know more of the dreadful evil from which he saves us; and the law makes the cross more appreciated. All the comforts of the Holy Spirit proceed on this. All the processes of sanctification tend to this. And if you, my friend, study God's word to learn what in you is different from what God expects it to be, if you abhor what God condemns, then you are growing in the love of God as well, and are more and more like him, as you grow in the likeness of your Saviour. If your mind is stayed on him, you will be kept in perfect peace.

True, you do not see God as you will in eternity. There comes an hour when that will break upon you. But this earth is before you, and the same God here. Can you see his glory *here*; and in His spirit who drank the bitter cup say, "Father, glorify thy name?" This happiness is now within your reach. Whatever is not, this is. Whatever you may not know, this you may know. Whatever you may lose, this you may not lose. It is quietness and assurance for ever. Nothing can really harm him who is God's friend. He whose will is God's, must evermore be happy. He who loves to see God now, in whatever forms he may be revealed, will love to see him in all the forms of eternity.

Take courage then, O child of God! Hope thou in him, for thou shalt yet praise him, who is the health of thy countenance and thy God. That same Spirit, that led you from worldliness and vanity, that, often grieved, has never left you, will be the last agent in your salvation, will be with you even in death. You can go forth into the untried scenes, with a holy confidence that wherever you go, you go where God is. Whatever you do not meet, you shall meet Him whom your soul loveth. Alone, as a mortal, but to go to Him who is all your salvation and all your desire, a mortal nevermore! Blessed hope! "Equal unto the angels!" To see, like them, the glory of God without dimness; to sing, like them, the praise of God without blunder! This subject, then, should give great comfort to all that love God.

2. Let me add, this subject should give great encouragement to sinners to repent and love God. Flee from him they can not. Hereafter, more than now, they must see him. And that they must see him is the very reason why he wishes them to love him. God does not wish to harm you, he does not wish to punish you. He wishes you to be happy for ever, but so long as God is what he is and you what you are, you must be miserable for ever.

Let, then; those of us who have no love to a holy God or holy duties, ponder the necessity of being born again. Let them know that a spotless morality may coëxist with a supreme love of self. Let them know that Christ came to reconcile them to God. Let them rejoice in the fact that God is ever near them, with his help. Let them know that his Spirit hovers over them. Without that Spirit, you can never be changed or saved.

"Oh! grieve him not away,
'Tis mercy's hour."

3. And as my last remark, let us all learn to love God more. Not because if we do we shall go to heaven, or if we do not we shall go to hell; not because paid or punished; but because we *ought* to love him. To love him is its own reward. To love him is to truly see him; while, without love, the mere sight of God will make us hate him, as it does evil spirits who do not love him. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God."

But oh, my friends, if you love God, no condition of yours is wretched. His presence lightens every load, his presence soothes every pang, his presence pours peace into the troubled soul, and his presence makes death radiant with smiles. As a furnace the faithful Saviour uses all these things, to purify and refine you, looking and watching for his own clear image to be reflected in you, and then you shall come out, like pure gold, to shine in his crown for ever. How glorious this explanation of all life's mysteries, this reconciliation of all life's contradictions! No tongue can tell, no

pencil paint, no song can celebrate the freedom and perfection of that hour, when, in this consummation of all discipline, you pass into his smiling presence, never more to sin through ages and ages eternal as the life of God. And the rapture of eternity is, *God is there!*

May these thoughts be with us now, prophecies of joy. In us may there be such a love of God, that we shall never ask where can we go from his spirit or flee from his presence, except to find, in the fact we can not flee, our greatest comfort and our surest evidence of hope.

THE PRAYER-MEETING.

Satan Silenced.

THERE is a story how the devil appeared to a dying man and showed him a parchment roll, which was very long, whereon was written on every side the sins of the poor sick man, which were many in number; and there were also written the idle words he had spoken in his life, together with the false words, the unchaste words, and angry words; afterward came his vain and ungodly words; and lastly, his actions, digested according to the commandments, whereupon Satan said:

"See here, behold thy virtues; see here, what thy examination must be."

Whereupon the poor sinner answered: "It is true, but thou hast not set down all, for thou shouldst have added and set down here below: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all our sins;' and this also should not have been forgotten: 'Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'" Whereupon the devil vanished. Thus if the devil should muster up our sins,

and set them in order before us, let but Christ be named in a faithful way, and he will give back, and fly away with all speed.

"My sins are great, I do confess,
And of a scarlet dye;
But Jesus' blood can wash me clean,
As God does testify."

Exposition and Application.

IN conversation with an American clergyman, Dr. Chalmers said, a sermon, properly considered, consists of two parts, *exposition* and *application*. The truth lies in the text, like a sword in its scabbard. The business of the minister is, first, to draw the sword—that is *exposition*; and next to cut and thrust with it on the right and on the left—that is *application*.

The hearers, first of all, must see what is *the mind of God* in the text, and then that mind of God is to be used for their reformation. It is not enough that the preacher preach the truth; the hearers must know for themselves that it is *the very truth of God*. The power does not lie simply in the truth,

but in the truth *perceived to be of God*. When this point has been gained, then the power of preaching is the *power of God*. Hence, careful exposition, showing beyond all question what is the mind of God in the text, is the indispensable first thing in every sermon. Without this, the sword of the Spirit is, practically, not there. The sword sheathed is of no avail. Let it be first drawn by exposition, and then let it be wielded with a will.

Entering into Joy.

THE day of final account will be something more than a day of joy, for it will be a day of triumph to those who have faithfully labored. Amid much discouragement and many reproaches they have wrought; and sometimes they have been tempted to quit a service which seemed to bring to them so little gain, and the present promise of so small reward. Still they have wrought humbly on in the faith of Him whom they have sought dutifully to serve, and when the Lord appears their triumph will be complete. Archbishop Leighton employs the following beautiful language: "It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness!" Happy are they who, having faithfully labored for the ascended Master, and having abundantly trusted in his worthy name, shall at last triumphantly enter into the joy of their Lord.

Triumph of Faith.

THERE is a striking and beautiful simplicity in a living and vital faith, such as is sometimes manifested in the closing scene of the dying Christian, which can impart a serene joy and peace to the soul when about to plume and spread its wings for the final flight.

A Christian woman was about to die. Death, on his pale horse, seemed to be coming in the distance and to be near at hand. Her pastor called to see and comfort her, and, as she lay gasping for breath, he asked if she felt prepared to die. Her answer was a very significant one.

"Mrs. M., you seem to be very sick."

"Yes, I am dying."

"And are you ready to die?"

"Sir, God knows—I have taken him at his word—and—I am not afraid to die."

After he had prayed with her, and was about to leave, she again took him by the hand, and managed to utter a few broken words. "I wanted to tell you—that I can trust in God—while I am dying. You have—often told me he would not—forsake me. And now I find it true—I am at peace—I die—willingly—and happy."

It was a triumphant scene to any believer, the perfect tranquillity in severe suffering, and in instant view of death. But the idea of faith presented in her words was doubly beautiful from its perfect simplicity. "God knows I have taken him at his word." Does not all unbelief consist in a reluctance to take God at his word?
L.